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P R 011305Z AEP 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5989
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4043
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2362
AMCONSUL DANANG 854

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 04674

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PHAN KHAC SUU

1. EMBOFF HAD A LONG, RAMBLING CONVERSATION WITH PHAN KHAC SUU MORNING SEPT 1. KGUYEN XUAN OANH, WHO CAN OFTEN BE SEEN LOITERING AROUND SUU'S OFFICE, WAS PRESENT THROUH-OUT.

2. SUU BEGAN BY REVIEWNING VARIOUS IRREGULARITIES HE EXPECTS MAY TAKE PLACE ON ELECTION DAY. OANH SECONDED HIS OBSERVA-TIONS. SUU BELIEVES MOST BLATANT ..IGGING WILL OCCUR WITHIN

PAE 2 RUMJIR 4674 C O N F I D E N T I A L
CONFINES OF MILITARY BASES, SUCH AS QUANG TRUNG TRAINING CENTER. SUU FEAR CIVILIAN SLATES WILL BE UNABLE TO EFFECTIVELY

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MONITOR BALLOTING PROCEDURES THERE, AND MILITARY WILL BE FREE TO MANIPULATE RESULTS. SUU BELIEVES ELECTION IRREGULARITIES ARE ALSO LIKELY TO BE PREVALENT IN ISOLATED RURAL AREAS. OANH CLAIMS THAT IN MANY REMOTE VILLAGES ON 15-20 PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN VOTER CARDS. CARDS ARE HELD BY VILLAGE OFFICIALS AND WILL BE DISTRIB[illegible]D ONLY TO VOTERS KNOWS TO FAVOR THIEU-KY. EMBOFF NOTED THAT IN 1966 CA ELECTION MAN VILLAGE AND HAMLET CHIEFS HELD CARDS UNTIL DAY BEFORE ELECTION FOR REASONS OF SECURITY. THEY WERE DISTRIBUTED IN TIME FOR PEOPLE TO VOTE, HOWEVER. SAME PROCEDURE IS UNDERSTOOD BE PRACTICE IN SOME AREAS THIS YEAR. SUU AND OANH CLAIM ELECTION IS LIKELY TO BE FREEST IN I AND II CORPS, BECAUSE VOTERS IN THESE AREAS ARE LIKELY TO BE LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO GOVERNMENT PRESSURE.

3. SUU STILL BELIEVES HE WILL DRAW A HEALTHY VOTE, ALTHOUGH HE SEEMS TO HAVE LOWERED HIS SIGHTS SOMEWHAT FROM HIS

EARLY AUGUST ESTIMATE OF ONE-THIRD OF TOTAL. HE EXPECTS TO DO WELL IN SAIGON, IN THE DELTA (WHERE HE THINKS MANY HOA HAO WILL VOTE FOR HIM DESPITE EFFORTS OF KY TO "BUY OFF" HOA HAO LEADERSHIP) AND IN CENTRAL VIETNAM. SUU INDICATED THAT SLIGHT DOWNWARD REVISION IN HIS ESTIMATE IS DUE TO UNFAIR GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN TACTICS. HE STILL SEEMS TO BE CONFIDENT OF VICTORY, HOWEVER.

4. ASKED ABOUT RUMORS OF POST-ELECTION TROUBLES, PARTICULARLY FROM AN QUANT BUDDHISTS, SUU SAID THIS MATTER WILL DEPEND ON FAIRNESS OF ELECTION. IF ELECTION IS RIGGED, PROTESTS ARE LIKELY FROM MANY QUARTERS. EMBOFF EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PROTESTS AND COMPLAINTS WOULD BE HANDLED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES OUTLINED IN ELECTORAL LAW AND CONSTITUTION, RATHER THAN TAKING FORM OF STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. SUU AGREED, AND DAID THAT HE INTENDED TO SEEK MODERATE SOLUTION TO ANY POST-ELECTION DIFFICULITIES WICH MIGHT ARISE.

5. EMBOFF CONGRATULATED SUU ON POSITIVE TONE OF HIS CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS, AND NOTED THAT SUU-DAN CAMPAIGN SEEMS

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TO HAVE BEEN WELL ORGANIZED. UU AGGRED THAT HIS CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION HAS PROVEN EFFECTIVE, FOR WHICH OANH DESERVES CREDIT. OANH NOTED THAT HE DID INDEED BRING CONSIDERABLE

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ASSETS TO SUU CAMP.

6. COMMENT: SUU'S CONFIDENCE IN HIS ELECTION PROSPECTS SEEMS TO REMAIN BASICALLY UNSHAKEN. WHILE HE MAY EXPRESS SERIOUS DOUBTS TO HIS CLOSE CONFIDENTS, IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT HE REALLY BELIEVES HE WILL WIN IN FAIR ELECTION. UNFORTUNATELY, SUU MAY THEREFORE CONSIDER THIEU-KY VICTORY IPSO FACTO PROOF OF RIGGED ELECTION. IN THAT EVEN SUU MAY NOT EXERT MODERATING INFLUENCE ON EVENTS.

7. SUU WAS EVEN MORE OBTUSE THAN USUAL IN THIS CONSERVATION. HE RAMBLED INTERMINABLY ABOUT HIS VAGUE PLANS FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM(ONE SUCH MONOLOGUE LASTED 20 MINUTES), WHILE ECONOMIST OANH NODDED HIS APPROVAL.
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